

LITIGATION BOUTIQUES **HOT LIST**

SPECIAL REPORT | At the 10 law firms spotlighted here, it's all about skill, not size. The lawyers at these litigation shops, all of which have fewer than 51 attorneys, are as clever at practicing on paper as they are at wooing a jury. Many of these lawyers have honed their craft at the biggest and best firms in the nation and have opted, once they've gained crucial work experience, for a small-firm career. We've highlighted the special strategies and creative approaches they used in 2013 to help set precedent, right wrongs and save the day for the client.



WILLENKEN WILSON LOH & DELGADO

Capitalizing on Experience at the Big Shops

Willenken Wilson Loh & Delgado is no place for attorneys to cut their teeth. The Los Angeles-based litigation boutique, which opened its doors in 2002, comprises a dozen veteran lawyers who contributed to a string of wins last year for major companies, name partner William Delgado said.

Those lawyers—who have come from top firms that include Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, & Flom; Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr; and

others—don't join the firm looking for their "first rodeo," he said.

"Our lawyers are trained at the country's best law firms, just not ours," said Delgado, who worked at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan before moving to Willenken in 2004.

In 2013, the small litigation shop picked up victories on behalf of some very big clients, including Microsoft Corp., Walgreen Co. and Southern California Gas Co.

Delgado and partner Eileen

Ahern successfully represented Microsoft in *Sokolowski v. Microsoft*, a consumer class action brought in November 2012 over its Surface tablet, released for sale the previous month. The plaintiff alleged the device had less usable storage capacity than advertised.

U.S. District Judge Manuel Real of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California dismissed the case in February 2013 in favor of arbitration, siding with Microsoft. The parties agreed to a



WILLIAM DELGADO

settlement for an amount that Delgado declined to reveal, although he called it a “good result.” Given the then-recent release of the Surface, Delgado said, the case presented a “make-or-break” situation for his firm.

Delgado and Ahern followed with another win for Microsoft. This time, the lawyers convinced U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California to deny class certification in *Gossoo v. Microsoft*. The class action relied on the Song-Beverly Credit Card Act, a 1971 law that prohibits retailers from using customer’s personal identifying information as a condition to accepting credit card payment. A trial for the individual plaintiff claims is

scheduled for April.

In 2013, name partner Jason Wilson secured a dismissal of a commercial lease case that property company Nordhoff Way LLC brought in Los Angeles County Superior Court against Walgreen Co. Nordhoff claimed that Walgreens owed it more than \$3.75 million after the pharmacy chain decided it didn’t want to open a store in a Nordhoff development in Northridge, California.

Last year, name partner Paul Loh reached a \$145,000 settlement in a products liability case brought in the Los Angeles County Superior Court against Southern California Gas Co. over a natural gas tank rupture. The settlement amount was the lowest

TRIAL TIPS

- Trial preparation starts the day the case comes in the door. Knowing who your witnesses might be, what documents you might use as exhibits, what evidence you need to present to satisfy the jury instructions—all of these things should be considered up-front.
- At trial, the jury is always watching. Every time they see you—whether it’s in the parking lot or yawning during your opponent’s cross-examination—they are making a judgment.

—WILLIAM DELGADO

FIRM FACTS

Founded: 2002 ■ **Based:** Los Angeles ■ **Total No. of Attorneys:** 12 ■ **Partners:** 6
■ **Associates:** 3

among the case’s five defendants that settled, according to the firm.

Brian Panish, a Panish Shea & Boyle partner who helped represent the plaintiffs in the case, said he was impressed by Willenken. Loh, he said, “was on top of things.”

—ANDREW RAMONAS